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ABSTRACT

Arguments are presented for conceptualizing validity within a postmodern approach. Validity, reliability, and generalizability have been a holy trinity of social science research, and standard definitions of validity have been taken from criteria developed for psychometric tests. From a postmodern point of view, validity is sometimes discarded as a leftover from a modernist correspondence theory of truth. One consequence of departing from a modern correspondence theory is seeing validity as depending on the quality of craftsmanship by investigation. In a postmodern age, the concept of knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by knowledge as a social construction of reality. Validity can come to hinge on the fundamental conceptions of the subject matter being investigated. Valid knowledge is not merely obtained by approximations to a given social reality but involves a conversation about the reality, and what is valid is decided through discourse. Truly valid research, in the postmodern era, would be research that makes questions of validity superfluous because of its craftsmanship and strong results. (Contains 23 references.) (SLD)

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VALIDATION AS COMMUNICATION AND ACTION

On the social contruction of validity

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What we are engaged in at this symposion may be seen as a social construction of validity, a discussion on the meaning of validity in a postmodern approach to qualitative research. We are trying to persuade each other, and the audience, of the validity of our arguments for a postmodern approach to validity. The following discussion may testify to the validity of our arguments for conceptualizing validity within a postmodern approach.

1. The trinity of validity, reliability and generalizability

The concepts of validity, reliability and generalizability have in modern social science obtained the status of some scientific holy trinity. They appear to belong to some abstract realm in a positivist sanctuary of science, far removed from the interactions of the everyday world, to be worshipped with respect by all true believers in modern science.

In a discussion of postmodern approaches to validity it may be appropriate to start with some remarks on the multiple contexts and discourses of validation and the social construction of validity. I shall start with a history of my own encounters with the validity concept.

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As a student of psychology in Norway in the 60s, I read heavy texts on the importance of validity, reliability and generalisability in scientific research. I tried to memorize the definitions of predictive validity, concurrent validity, content validity, face validity, and struggled to understand the concept of construct validity. The very terms "validity", "reliability" and "generalisability" did not belong to the Norwegian vernacular, but were some foreign English-Latin terms. The nature of the psychometric discussions of validity appeared furter abstract and esoteric, belonging in some distant philosophical universe together with Kant's trancendental apriori's and the like. When I dared to ask some natural scientists on campus about these fundamental scientific concepts, I was somewhat bewildered to find out that the conceptual holy trinity of psychological science was often unknown to natural scientists.

The concepts of validity, reliability and generalisability were, however, very real to us students of psychology - they were frequently used as suitable examination topics to differentiate between students who had, and those who had not pledged allegeance to the scientific trinity of psychology.

When later traveling in the United States I learned other meanings of the terms validity and reliability; for example when told by writing a check in the supermarket that my European driver's licence was not valid as identification, or in an academic discussion that my argument was not valid, the information about the used car I was looking at car was not reliable, and the car dealer being known to be an unreliable person. Here the terms valid and reliable belonged to daily communication, important to the the ongoing actions of everyday life. (If I today should here start requesting an extra ten minutes time for my presentation with the argument that I am a foreigner, the chairman would hardly just see that as an interesting postmodern freedom of interpretation, just as valid as a literal interpretation of the alloted speech time, but likely rule out my argument as invalid.)

When later engaged in qualitative research I encountered the postitivist trinity again, here used tc disqualify qualitative research. The stimulus "qualitative research interview" appeared to automatically trigger three conditioned responses from the mainstream tradition: One, "the results are not reliable, they are produced by leading interview questions"; two "the results are not generalizable, there are too few interviews"; and three, "the interview findings are not valid, how can you know if you find out what the person really means?".

From some qualitative researchers there have been an opposite attitude to questions of validity, reliability, and generalizability, dismissing them as some oldfashioned positivist reified and oppressive concepts, hampering any creative and emancipatory qualitative research. Other qualitative researchers have gone beyond the relativism of a rampant antipositivism and reclaimed ordinary language terms to discuss the truth value of their findings, using concepts such as trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability. Other qualitative resarchers have retained the concept of validity and introduced new formulations, such as ecological validity, catalytic validity, etc.

I shall now leave the multiple discourses of validity, reliability and generalizability, and for the sake of brevity focus on the specific issues of validitation in the remainder of this presentation.

The standard definitions of validity in social science have been taken over from the criteria developed for psychometric tests and formalised by Cronbach and Meehl in 1955. Within psychology the subsequent discourse on validity has taken place in the context of a positivist philosophy of science and a correspondence theory of truth. Validity has been linked to psychometrics, where the concurrent and predicitive validity of the psychological tests were declared in statistical correlation coefficients, indicating correspondence between test results and some external criteria.

In social science textbooks today one finds both a narrow and a broad definition of validity. The most common definition of validity is expressed by the question: are we ***measuring*** what we think we are measuring? (e.g. Kerlinger, 1973). Qualitative research is then invalid if they do not result in numbers. A broader conception of validity pertains to whether a method ***investigates*** what it purports to investigate and to the extent to which observations reflect the phenomena of interest (e.g. Pervin, 1984). In ordinary language dictionaries "validity" refers to the truth and correctness of a statement. A valid argument is well grounded, justifiable, strong, and convincing. A valid inference is correctly derived from its premises.

From a postmodern perspective the issues of validity is sometimes discarded as some leftover from a modernist correspondence theory of truth. There are multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths, and the the concept of validity indicates a firm boundary line between truth and non truth. The present approach represents a middle of the road position, departing from the lived world and daily language, where issues of reliable witnesses and valid arguments are part of the natural interaction.

In the following section one consequence of departing from a modern correspondence theory of truth shall be depicted as a common understanding approach to validity as craftmanship. Thereafter more specific consequences of a postmodern constructionist approach to knowledge will be discussed and validitation as communication and and action will be be outlined.

2. Validity as qualitty of craftmanship

We shall here attempt to demystify the question of validity, to bring it back from the abstractions of philosophy of science and to specific issues in the everyday world. With an alternative concept of validity - going from correspondence with an objective reality to defensible knowledge claims - validity is ascertained by examining the sources of invalidity; and the stronger the attempts at falsification a proposition has survived, the more valid, the more trustworthy the knowledge. Validation comes to depend upon the quality of craftmanship by investigation, continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings (Kvale, 1989). In a craftmanship approach to validation quality-control takes places during production rather than through inspection at the end of the production line.

To validate is to investigate. An investigative concept of validation is inherent in the grounded theory approach of Glasser and Strauss (1967). Validation is here not some final product control or verification; verification is built into the research process with continual checks of the

credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Miles and Huberman (1984) emphasize that there are no canons or infallible decision rules for establishing the validity of qualitative research. Their approach is to analyse the many sources of potential biases that may invalidate qualitative observations and interpretations, and to outline in detail tactics for testing and confirming qualitative findings.

To validate is to question. When ascertaining validity, the questions of "what" and "why" should be answered before the question of "how": the content and purpose of an investigation precedes the method. The forms of validation depend upon the research questions asked when interpreting an interview statement, such as the following statement of a high-school pupil:

"Grades are often unjust, because they very often -- very often -- are only a measure of how much you talk, and how much you agree with the teacher's opinion."

If this statement is read *experientially*, the pupil experiences the grades as unjust, giving reasons for this. A validation would involve further questioning of the pupil, clarifying his experienced meanings of grades and unfairness. Read *veridically*, the truth of the pupil's hypothesis about the correlation between the amount of speech and grades was checked by an informant-triangulation -- other pupils also pointed to a connection, whereas the interviewed teachers rejected any correlation between the amount of speech and grades. For lack of observation of actual classroom behavior, an indirect method-triangulation was attempted, which gave potential support to the speech-amount hypothesis of grades -- for the thirty pupils interviewed there was a connection between how much they talked during the interview and their grade-point average (correlation: 0.65; $p. < .001$). Read *symptomatically*, the statement may be interpreted as a rationalization, the pupil justifying his own low grades by attributing the higher grades of others to their amount of talk an interpretation which might be pursued within the context of psychoanalytic theory of defense mechanisms.

The forms of validation for the three readings of, or questions addressed to, the interview statement differ and depend upon what is being validated. A common critique of research interviews and therapeutic interviews is that their findings are not valid because the interviewees' or the patients' reports may be false, a possibility which needs to be checked in the specific cases. The issue of validity again depends on the "what" of the researcher's questions. The opinion about high grades being a measure of how much a pupil talks may be empirically false when read veridically as information about factors leading to high grades. Read experientially or symptomatically as representative of the pupil's beliefs about grades, the statement may still provide valid knowledge. The "what" of the symptomatic reading is in the latter case reformulated from the factual to the *production* of an invalid report, whereby the "who" of the interview is changed from being a witness to being himself the representative or subject of the interview. And whereas this interpretation concerns the production of a possibly invalid understanding, the Thomas theorem of sociology focuses upon the *consequences* of an invalid understanding -- "If men believe ideas are real, they are real in their consequences". Applied to the above interview statement, an empirically, possibly incorrect, belief in a connection between grades and the amount of speech might lead the pupils to talk more in the hope of attaining better grades, and thus be real in its consequences.

To validate is to theorize. Pursuing the methodological issues of validation generates theoretical issues concerning the nature of the phenomena investigated. The inconclusive results of the above attempt at an informant-triangulation concerning the connection between speech and grades need not merely indicate a problem of method, but may also more theoretically raise questions about the social construction of school reality. Pupils and teachers may live in different social realities with regard to what pupil behavior leads to good grades. It is possible that pupils, as a kind of "superstitious" behavior, believe in a connection where there is none, or it may be that teachers overlook, or deny, a relation that actually exists. Such a social perspective in school becomes utterly complex if validation of the second part of the statement were to be attempted -- namely that good grades are contingent upon the amount of agreement with the teacher's opinion. Validation here leads to a theoretical questioning of the nature of the social reality investigated. In the terms of grounded theory, verifying interpretations is an intrinsic part of the generation of theory. In conclusion, pursuing the issues of validiation as craftmanship here leads to issues of the social construction of reality. We shall now turn to more specific implications for validity of a constructive postmodern approach.

3. Validity in a postmodern context

In a postmodern age the conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by knowledge as a social construction of reality. There is a focus upon interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of the lived world. Knowledge is not a matter of interaction with a nonhuman reality, but of communication between persons, the conversation becomes the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood. With a breakdown of universal metanarratives of legitimation (Lyotard, 1984), there is an emphasis on the local context, upon the social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality where knowledge is validated through practice.

Contrary to a dismissal of validity as some modernist reification becoming obsolete with a postmodern construction of reality, Lather (1991) positions validity as an incitement to discourse, a fertile obsession, where she attempts to reinscribe validity in a way that uses the postmodern problematic to losen the master code of positivism, and argues for a reconceptualised validity in theorizing practice within the context of openly ideological research. She suggests four possible framings of validity, each referring to different positions within postmodern philosophy: simulcra/ironic validity; paralogy/neo-pragmatic validity: Derridean rigour/rhizomatic validity; and voloptuous validity/situated validity. Validity here comes to hinge upon the fundamental conceptions of the subject matter investigated.

The following discussion of validity represents a cautions postmodern approach (Kvale, 1992), in the terms of Rosenau (1992) it is an "affirmative" and not a "skeptical" postmodernism. First the relation of construct validity to a social construction of knowledge will be pointed out. Then aspects of postmodern knowledge leading to communicative and a pragmatic conceptions of validity will be drawn in.

A radicalisation of the originally psychometric concept of construct validity brings it close to a postmodern emphasis on the social construction of knowledge. Construct validity pertains to the measurement of a theoretical construct, such as intelligence and authoritarianism, by different measures; it involves correlations with other measures of the construct and logical analysis of the relationships. Cronbach, who together with Meehl introduced the concept of construct validity in 1955, has later argued for a broader concept of construct validity which pertains to qualitative summaries as well as numerical scores: it is an open process where to validate is to investigate - "...validation is more than corroboration; it is a process for developing sounder interpretations of observations" (1971, p. 433). And in an article where he argues that valuefree standards for validity is a contradiction in terms, he concludes with a discoursive concept of a validity resting upon public discussion, where the interpretation of a test is going to remain open and unsettled, the more so because of the role values play in action based on tests.

"The validity of an interpretation cannot be established by a research monograph or detailed manual. The aim for the report is to advance sensible discussion... The institutions of the polity are geared to weigh up reasonable, partly persuasive, disputed arguments; and they can be tolerant when we acknowledge uncertainties. The more we learn, and the franker we are with ourselves and our clientele, the more valid the use of tests will become" (1980, p. 107).

Cherryholmes (1988) has argued that the concept of construct validity is a discursive and rhetorical concept. A construct and its measurement are validated when the discourse is persuasive to the community of researchers. And a constructive conception of validity does not pertain only to the original discourse of psychometric measurement and experimental design, but opens in Cherryholmes analysis for multiple discourses, such as phenomenological, critical, interpretative, and deconstructive analyses. In a discussion of narrative research Mishler (1990) reformulates validation as the social construction of knowledge. Valid knowledge claims are established through a discourse through which the results of a study come to be viewed as sufficiently trustworthy for other investigators to rely upon in their own work.

Two aspects of postmodern conceptions of knowledge shall now be mentioned and their consequences for validation spelled out in the following sections. They concern the rejection of an objective reality to be mirrored as true knowledge, and the surpassing of a modern legimation mania.

First, a modern belief in an objective reality is replaced by an emphasis upon a social construction of reality. A correspondence criterion of true knowledge as mirroring reality recedes, and coherence and pragmatic conceptions of truth come to the foreground. Method as a truth guarantee dissolves; with a social construction of reality the emphasis is on the discourse of the community of researchers. Communication of knowledge becomes focal, with esthetics and rhetorics becoming important in a scientific discourse.

Second, a modern legitimation mania recedes and there is an emphasis upon a pragmatic proof through action. The legitimation of knowledge by external justification through appeals to some grand systems, as well as the modern fundamentalism of securing knowledge on some undoubtable stable fundament, lose interest. Knowledge rather becomes the ability to perform

effective actions. Key issues here become the criteria of efficiency and their desirability, involving ethical issues of right action. Values do not belong to a realm separated from scientific knowledge, but are intrinsically tied to the creation and application of knowledge.

A move from knowledge as correspondence with an objective reality to knowledge as a social construction of reality involves a change in emphasis from observation of, to a conversation and interaction with, a social world. Truth is constituted through a dialogue; valid knowledge claims emerge as conflicting interpretations and action possibilities are discussed and negotiated among the members of a community. Some consequences of this contextual approach to validation shall now be spelled out in the following sections in relation to communicative and pragmatic conceptions of validation.

4. Communicative Validity

A communicative validity involves testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue. Valid knowledge emerges as conflicting knowledge claims are argued in a dialogue. Valid knowledge is not merely obtained by approximations to a given social reality, but involves a conversation about the social reality; what is a valid observation is decided through a discourse.

In the social sciences, a communicative concept of validity is involved in psychoanalysis, where the validity of an interpretation is worked out in a dialogue of patient and therapist. Also in systems evaluations a communicative approach to validation is involved, House (1980) has thus emphasized that evaluation research does not mainly concern predicting events, but rather whether the audience of a report can see new relations and answer new but relevant questions.

There is today some danger that a dialogue conception of thruth and the concept of communicative validation may become empty global and positive undifferentiated terms, without the conceptual and theoretical foundations being worked out. Here, some specific questions concerning the how, why, and who of communication will be raised.

How. The form of communication may involve persuasion through rational discourse or populist demagogy. The forms of persuasion will be different in the harsh logical argumentation of a Socratic dialogue, in a humanistic "I-thou" encounter based on good feelings and reciprocal sympathy, in a narrative monologue capturing an audience, and in the juridical proceedings and legal interpretations in a courtroom.

A philosophical discourse is characterized by a rational argumentation. The participants are obliged to test statements about the truth and falsity of propositions on the basis of argued points of view, and the best argument wins. The discourse is a form of argumentation where no social excertion of power takes place, the only form of power being the force of the better argument.

Why. The question here concerns the purpose of a discourse about truth. What are the aims and criteria of arriving at a true meaning? Habermas' discourse theory implies a consensual theory of truth, the discourse aiming at universally valid truths as an ideal. Eisner (1991) has argued for

qualitative research as art, based on connoiseurship and criticism, accepting the personal, literary and even poetic as valid sources of knowledge. The aim is here consensus: "Consensual validation is, at base, agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right" (1991, p.112). From a postmodern perspective, Lyotard (1984) has argued that consensus is only a stage in a discussion, and not its goal, which he posits as paralogy - to create new ideas, new differentiations, new rules for the discourse. To Lyotard, discourse is a game between adversaries rather than a dialog between partners.

Who. The concept of communicative validity again raises the question of who communicates with whom. Who is a legitimate partner in a dialogue about true knowledge? Validation through "community of scholars" is nothing new; in natural science, the acceptance of the scientific community has been the last, ultimate, criterion for ascertaining the truth of a proposition. What is relatively new is the emphasis upon truth as negotiated in a local context, as well as the extension of the interpretive community to include the subjects investigated. Communicative validity here approximates an educational endeavour, where truth is developed in a communicative process, both researcher and subject learning and changing through the dialogue.

A communicative approach to validation of interview interpretations may be developed in relation to three interpretative communities: the member of the interpretive community validating an interpretation may be the *subject* interviewed, a *general community* interpreting within a critical commonsense understanding analoguous to a jury, and *the scientific community* of scholars possessing theoretical competence in the specific area (Kvale, 1983 & 1987). Thus by the speech amount hypothesis of grades discussed above the interviewed subject is the ultimate criterion regarding the experiential meaning of the statement. An evaluation of the veridical reading of the statement requires, however, a statistical competence regarding the interpretation of the correlations reported between grades and talkativity in the interviews. The symptomatic reading of the statement may follow from a common sense understanding, and it may be extended by drawing in psychoanalytical theory of defense mechanisms. And validation of a theoretical interpretation of the statement of knowledge as a commodity, in line with Marx's theory of a contradiction between use value and exchange value, would require theoretical compentence in this theory.

A heavy reliance on intersubjective validation may, in some cases, also imply a lack of work on the part of the researcher, a lack of confidence in his interpretations, and an unwillingness to take responsibility for his interpretations. And there may be a general populist trend when leaving the validation of interpretations to the readers, as a readers response validation, with an abdication to the ideology of a consumer society: "the customer is always right."

Power and truth. Habermas' consensus theory of truth is based on the ideal of a dominancefree dialog, which is an abstraction from the webs of power relationships within real life discourses, and again in contrast with Lyotard's postmodern understanding of a conversation as a game of power play. There is also the issue of who decides who is a competent and legitimate member of the interpretive community. The selection of members of the community to make decisions about issues of truth and value is considered crucial for the results in many cases, such as the selection

alteration of neurotic symptoms (Freud, 1963, p. 279). Spence (1982) has followed up the emphasis on the pragmatic effects of interpretations: narrative truth is constructed in the therapeutic encounter, it carries the conviction of a good story, and it is to be judged by its aesthetic value and by the curative affect of its rhetorical force.

How. The form of pragmatic validation varies; there may be the patient's reactions to the psychoanalyst's interpretation of his dreams, and the patient's reactions to a behavior therapist's interventions in the reinforcement contingencies of his problem behavior. There are the reactions of the audience to a system evaluation report, and the cooperative interaction of researcher and subjects in action research.

Why. A scientific discourse is, in principle, indefinite; there is no requirement of immediate action; new arguments which may alter or invalidate earlier knowledge may always appear. In contrast to the uncoerced consensus of the scientific discourse, there are other contexts which require actions to be taken and decisions to be made which may involve a coercion to consensus, e.g. in the proceedings of a jury, in the negotiations of an dissertation committee, and decisions about therapeutic interventions.

A pragmatic concept of truth is whatever assists us to take actions that produce the desired results. Deciding what are the desired results involves values and ethics. Within systems evaluation, the ethical aspect of validation is spelled out by House: "the validity of an evaluation depends upon whether the evaluation is true, credible, and normatively correct" (1980, p. 255).

Who. The question of "who" also raises ethical and political issues. Who is to decide the direction of change? There may be personal resistance to change as well as conflicting vested interests in the outcome of a study. Thus, concerning audience validation by system evaluation, who are the stakeholders to be included in the decisive audience: the funding agency, the leaders or the employees of the system evaluated, or the clients of the system?

Power and Truth. Pragmatic validation raises the issue of power and truth in social research: where is the power to decide what are the desired results of a study, or the direction of change; what values are to constitute the basis for action?

The understanding of validation suggested here - validation as investigation, with a communicative and a pragmatic approach to validity - does not solve the issues of the validity of qualitative research, nor does it come up with a set of alternative criteria to the psychometric forms of validation. By going beyond the correspondence theory of knowledge at the root of the tradtional validity concepts, the present approach suggests alternative contexts for understanding the validity of social research, with alternative questions to be asked about the truth of knowledge as communication with and action upon the social world.

of members of a jury, or a committee to examine a Ph.D. candidate, or an appointment committee.

5. Pragmatic Validity

Pragmatic validation is verification in the literal sense, "to make true", the effectiveness of our knowledge belief is demonstrated by the effectiveness of our action. Knowledge is action rather than observation. To pragmatists, truth is whatever assists us to take actions that produce the desired results. The justification of knowledge is here replaced by the application of knowledge.

In his second thesis on Feuerbach, Marx stated that the question of whether human thought can lead to objective truth is not a theoretical but a practical one. Man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power of his thinking in practice. And the eleventh thesis is more pointed; the philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, what matters is changing the world.

A pragmatic knowledge interest may counteract a tendency of social constructionism to circle around in endless interpretations, by focusing on the of relevance of the interpretations for instigating change. Within the social sciences, current action research goes beyond description of social conditions to attempt to change the very conditions investigated. Also, systems evaluation and psychoanalysis involve an extension of the correspondence criterion to include pragmatic validity. "The ultimate test of the credibility of an evaluation report is the response of decision makers and information users to that report" (Patton, 1980, p. 339).

A strong emphasis on explicit communicative validation may be inadequate to much of professional knowledge. The relational, tacit and pragmatical aspects of much professional knowledge can hardly be presented verbally in explicit rules. The oral and othen tacit knowledge of the therapist is not easily transformed to written guidelines. Important aspects of the therapeutic knowledge is best communicated by examplars, anecdotes, case stories, narratives and metaphors. Such forms of transmission come closer to craftmanship and art than to the formal norms of scientific reporting. Important parts of the tacit, background, knowledge of a profession can hardly be taught by direct verbal exposition, and is best transmitted by participation in local forms of practice. With changes in the conceptions of knowledge there is today an increasing recognition of the role of apprenticeship and mentoring in education, not only in the crafts, but also for the higher professions, including scientific work (Kvale, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mishler, 1990).

Pragmatic validation of interpretations goes beyond communicative validation. The practical knowledge interest of helping patients change is intrinsic to the therapeutic interview: "It is indeed one of the distinctions of psychoanalysis that research and treatment proceed hand in hand" (Freud, 1963, p. 120). By therapeutic interpretations Freud did not rely on a merely communicative approach to validation; he regarded neither the patients "yes" or "no" to the therapists interpretation as sufficient confirmation or disconfirmation, but recommended more indirect forms of validation by observing the patient's subsequent behavior to an interpretation, such as changes of the patient's free associations dreams, the recall of forgotten memories, and

may not initially, have been critical, may start becoming suspicous by the very preoccupation with telling the truth. Such a counterfactuality of strong and repeated emphasis on the truth of a statement may be expressed in the folk saying, "Beware when they swear they are telling the truth."

An excessive modern justification and sceptisism may feed upon each other in a viscious circle. Two ways out of a resulting validation mania and validity erosion may be suggested. First, to develop intrinsic quality control during production, rather than through inspection of the final product at the end of the production line. The *solidity of the craftmanship* during the production makes the accountant's quality control of the final product less neccesary. Second, to develop *strong products* that are so strong and convincing in their own right, that they so to say carry the validation with them, such as a strong piece of art. Appeals to external certification, or official validity stamps of approval, then become secondary. Valid research would in this sense be research which makes questions of validity superfluous. Ideally, the research procedures would be transparent and the results evident, the conclusions of a study intrinsically convincing as true, beautiful and good. This leads to a move from the modern positivist trinity of validity, reliability and generalizability to the classical ideal of a unity of truth, good and beauty.

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6. Validity of the validity question

In the introduction we outlined a multiplicity of discourses on validity, starting with a holy trinity of validity, reliability and generalizability in modern social science. We shall conclude by inquiring to the validity of the validity question itself as it enters different discourses on validity. Is the question of validity in social science a valid and legitimate question?

Above we have argued for a demystification of validity, maintaining that questions of the validity of information is a normal activity in the interactions of daily life. And we have argued for integrating validation in the craftmanship of research, and also for extending the concept of validation from observation to include communication about, and pragmatic effects of, knowledge claims. In conclusion we shall now point to some dangers of a preoccupation with the validity question.

A strict psychometric conception limiting validity to quantified knowledge serves as a *gatekeeper* to keep qualitative research outside of the halls of science. A strong focus on validity in research may further foster an emphasis upon the verification of knowledge, rather than the generation of new knowledge. The issues of *control and legitimation* may dominate over, and hamper creativity, in production of new insights. When one walks on thin ice, it is neccessary to check the ice for every step. Walking on normal ground, one would hardly arrive anywhere if one were to control the ground for every step. A strong emphasis on validation may also be an expression of *uncertainty* of the value and worth of one's own product, a requirement of external confirmation of value of one's work through some official certificates of validity.

A strong focus on validation may also be an expression of a general *skepticism* towards the products of others. There is a doubting of the value of a product, continually looking everywhere for flaws, errors, and possibilities of deception. Modern attempts to avoid religious dogma may have led to the other extreme of skepticism. A quest for validation here appears as a hermenueutics of suspicion, doubting everything which is said. Uncertainty about own products and skepticism about the products of others may be neccessary, but when elevated to main approaches, dominating the discourse of research, they may becomme self defeating. A pervasive attention on validation may here be counterproductive and lead to a general devalidation. Rather than let the product speak for itself, a modern legitimation mania, may, in its turn, further a *validity corrosion* - the more one validates, the greater the need for further validation. The quest for certainty and legitimate foundations may entail a skeptical attitude, which by continually asking for valid proof may further enhance the skeptical attitude. The modern preoccupation with verification may in some cases be scratching where it does not itch, with the scratching intensifying the itching as well as provoking itches where there previously were none.

A research report repeatedly and strongly stressing the validity of the findings may, in extreme versions, foster a suspicion in the reader. This may be case if one hears something like this in an ordinary conversation: "It is definitely true what I have told you; there is certainly nothing to be doubted; what I have told you is completely in accordance with the facts; there is no reason to not believe what I am telling you; I can prove everything I have said, etc." The listener, who

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